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General and complete disarmament: small arms

Convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, by resolution 53/77 E on 4 December 1998, entitled "Small arms", requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report containing his recommendations to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, with a view to a decision by the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on the objective, scope, agenda, dates, venue and preparatory committee for an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects.

2. By the same resolution, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of all Member States on the objective, scope, agenda, dates and venue of and preparatory work for an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects and to take into account those views as well as the views already expressed by them in their previous replies to the request of the Secretary-General for their views in accordance with paragraph 4 of Assembly resolution 52/38 J of 9 December 1997.

3. Further, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take into account his report on small arms (A/52/298, annex) as well as relevant recommendations to be made in his report prepared with the assistance of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which would be submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, in accordance with paragraph 5 of Assembly resolution 52/38 J.

II. Action taken

4. Pursuant to paragraph 4 of Assembly resolution 52/38 J, the following States had provided their views to the Secretary-General: Belarus, Canada, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Israel, Jordan, New Zealand, Poland, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Singapore, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union) and the United States of America (A/53/169); Japan (A/53/169/Add.1); Brazil, Bulgaria and Mexico (A/53/169/Add.2); South Africa (A/53/169/Add.3); and Cuba (A/53/169/Add.4).

5. In accordance with paragraph 3 (a) of resolution 53/77 E, a note verbale dated 20 January 1999 was addressed to all Member States inviting them to provide information on the subject. To date, replies have been received from: Algeria, Australia, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Cuba, Germany (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union, as well as of associated countries and countries members of the European Free Trade Association that are members of the European Economic Area), the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Malta, Monaco, the Russian Federation, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America.

6. The above-mentioned replies are reproduced in section IV below. Should any further replies be received from Member States, they will be issued in addenda to the present report.

7. Pursuant to paragraph 3 (b) of resolution 53/77 E, the relevant recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms on this question will be contained in the report of the Secretary-General on this subject, to be submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session (A/54/258).

III. Recommendations

8. Since the submission of the Secretary-General's first report on small arms to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session (A/52/298), a political momentum has been building to give priority attention to curb illicit arms traffic in all its aspects. The demand for concerted global action is shared across a wide geographical and political spectrum among a very large number of countries, although not all of them are affected with equal severity by the direct and indirect consequences of the illicit arms traffic. It appears opportune for the General Assembly to undertake the implementation of its resolution 53/77 E, in which it decided to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001 and welcomed the offer by the Government of Switzerland to host the conference at Geneva.

9. The success of this event under the auspices of the United Nations would depend substantially on thorough preparations. Past precedents suggest that decisions pertaining to the objective, scope and agenda of such a conference are taken by the preparatory committee established for that purpose, which also decides upon the frequency of its sessions and the nature of its input for the final outcome of the conference. The preparatory process would gain from receiving the views of representatives of non-governmental organizations, the academic community and other members of civil society.

IV. Replies received from Governments

Algeria

[Original: French]
[2 June 1999]

Algeria supported and voted for General Assembly resolution 53/77 E, entitled "Small arms". It therefore supports its aims and is in favour of convening and holding, in 2000, an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, as decided in paragraph 1 of the resolution.

In this connection, Algeria considers it essential that the objectives of such a conference be discussed in advance, within the framework of preparatory meetings. Moreover, Algeria believes that the conference should reiterate and reaffirm the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, the right of self-defence and the right of each State to develop its defence system in order to protect its national security.

The disarmament process will be complete only when it addresses an issue which is particularly important and sensitive for a large number of States, namely, the proliferation and illicit transfer of conventional weapons which contribute to and exacerbate new, violent and transboundary phenomena such as terrorism, trafficking in narcotic drugs and organized crime. The objectives of the conference should not be limited to adopting moratoriums and codes of conduct proposed and drafted by arms-producing countries. The conference should also, and above all, look at ways and means of neutralizing and dismantling all the uncontrolled networks that supply terrorists, criminals and drug traffickers with weapons.

In this context, Algeria, which devotes only a very small part of its gross domestic product to arms spending, recognizes that the international community must look into the question of the proliferation of and the illicit trade in small arms, like that in other kinds of weapons, and reiterates its readiness to consider any constructive initiative or action to this end.

Australia

[Original: English]
[10 May 1999]

Objectives

The complex and multifaceted nature of the small arms issue, which involves security, arms control, law enforcement, human rights and development concerns, does not lend itself to a single, all-encompassing solution.

It has been suggested that the proposed conference should be a political event, with the primary purpose of producing a political declaration. Although Australia recognizes the importance of mobilizing international political will behind efforts to curb the proliferation and misuse of small arms, this should not be the overriding intent of the conference.

We believe that the primary focus of the conference should be on formulating practical suggestions to reduce destabilizing accumulations of and the proliferation of small arms. This would have the most significant impact on limiting the debilitating humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of the illicit small arms trade. In this context, the many national and regional activities currently under way could serve as building blocks for a broader international effort. An effective, plausible response to the small arms problem will require complementary efforts at the national, regional and international levels.

Making the conference primarily a political event could raise unrealistic expectations as to what can be achieved in the short term, and distract from practical measures which could have a positive impact in the short term.

In the event that the protocol to the United Nations convention against transnational organized crime, on trafficking in firearms, has not been concluded by the time of the small arms conference, Australia would hope that the latter conference would create the necessary political impetus to conclude these negotiations quickly.

There have also been suggestions that the conference might promote the negotiation of an international convention on small arms — possibly a convention on the marking of small arms. While this is a desirable goal which would likely prove useful in the future in tracing the origins and flow of small arms traffic, we are not convinced of its utility, as a focus for the forthcoming conference, in addressing the more immediate problems posed by excessive accumulations of small arms already stockpiled or in circulation. Australia would prefer that international efforts continue to concentrate on alleviating the effects of small arms misuse and proliferation, which are felt most often in the world's poorest countries.

Before we reach the stage of a broader international convention, we need to be in a position to gauge better the effectiveness of current activities at a regional level. The precise elements of any future international convention on

small arms would also need to be decided, including the need for transparent, credible verification and compliance provisions.

The objectives of the conference should be sharply focused to avoid duplicating the work already under way on small arms in a number of regional and international forums. These forums include the European Union, the Organization of American States, the Organization for African Unity, the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the South Pacific Forum.

Scope

In keeping with the intentions of General Assembly resolution 53/77 E, Australia believes the international conference should concentrate on the illicit side of the arms trade, where there appears to be more realistic opportunities for gaining early consensus and progress.

While we acknowledge that the line between licit and illicit trade is often indistinct, explicitly extending the conference to include licit trade could broaden the conference's scope to unmanageable levels, and decrease the likelihood of producing a viable, implementable outcome.

It will be important for the preparatory committee for the conference to:

(a) Identify clear objectives for the conference;

(b) Ensure that the conference does not duplicate work conducted elsewhere;

(c) Ensure that the conference builds upon and adds value to the present strands of international debate and action on small arms.

Agenda

Based on the foregoing, Australia's preliminary view is that the following items could be included in the conference's agenda:

(a) National measures and export controls: their effectiveness in reducing illicit small arms traffic, and possible mechanisms for the sharing of expertise;

(b) National and regional activities as building blocks to a broader international response.

Dates

Given the busy forthcoming international arms control and disarmament agenda, it will be difficult to consider convening the conference before 2001. Holding the conference in 2001 would also allow more time for preparation and refining of objectives. While Australia is flexible on the matter of timing, we would suggest that the meeting be held some time in the latter half of 2001.

Venue

In determining a venue for the conference, we should keep in mind that the problems posed by small arms are felt more profoundly in developing countries. While we have no firm views on the matter, the conference's venue should promote an inclusive approach to the issue and allow for the greatest possible participation by States which are most directly affected by the small arms problem.

Preparatory work

The preparatory process for the international conference should be open-ended, inclusive and consultative. The pervasive nature of the small arms problem, affecting many regions of the world, means that many States will have a close interest in preparations for the conference, and in particular in the development of its focus, scope and objectives.

Belarus

[Original: Russian]
[25 May 1999]

Belarus attaches great importance to the issues raised in General Assembly resolution 53/77 E. Belarus was one of the sponsors of that resolution, and its representative participates actively in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. In 1998, Belarus submitted information on small arms (see A/53/169).

Pursuant to that information, the Permanent Mission wishes to inform you that, on 10 January 1999, the Council of Ministers of Belarus adopted decision No. 27 on improvement of State control over the movement of specific goods (jobs, services) across the customs border of Belarus. The decision establishes a unified procedure for licensing the export (import) of goods (jobs, services). The Council of Ministers also approved a statute on the execution of commitments to use specific exported (imported) goods (jobs, services) for their declared purposes and on the monitoring of such commitments.

Belarus is in favour of convening an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects and believes that the holding of the conference could serve the purpose of drawing the attention of the international community to the serious problem of illicit trade in small

arms and light weapons and coordinating a number of concrete measures to limit the illicit arms trade.

Any decision on the venue of the international conference on the illicit arms trade must take into account the need to ensure the most advantageous financial conditions for the participants in the conference; a broad geographical spectrum of participating countries; maximum effectiveness of the work of the conference; and the necessary security guarantees for delegations.

Bolivia

[Original: Spanish]
[5 May 1999]

Objective

To draft legal instruments that will make it easier to control indiscriminate trafficking in small arms and to impose penalties on Member States that collude in the illicit trade in such weapons.

Scope

The illicit trade in small arms is one of the main contributing factors to the destabilization of democracy in the free world through drug trafficking, guerrilla warfare, internal subversive movements, terrorism, wars and other attacks on the freedom of peoples and the rights of humankind.

Accordingly, the scope of the conference on small arms should compel all Member States not only to participate but also to act in order to eradicate the scourges that currently threaten the security of States.

Agenda

Bolivia believes that the international conference should discuss the following issues:

(a) Definition of small arms and/or small-calibre arms;

(b) Classification of small arms for use in the armed forces, police and internal security forces and for civilian or public use (sporting and hunting weapons);

(c) Controls on external trade in small arms; United Nations oversight bodies: Security Council or a new monitoring body. United Nations regulation with a view to controlling such trade;

(d) Controls within States. Proposals for the regulation of internal trade in small arms;

(e) Ammunition: its classification. Ammunition for public use for sporting purposes. External trade. Oversight and regulation by the United Nations;

(f) Internal trade: recommendations for its control and recodification.

Dates

Bolivia proposes that the dates of the conference should be set by the United Nations Secretariat and should fall within the months indicated in the following timetable for the various activities that have to be undertaken.

	Months		
Year	*From*	*To*	*Activity*
1999	June	July	Organization of the preparatory committee for the international conference
1999	November	December	First meeting of the preparatory committee
2000	June	August	Second coordinating meeting
2001	January	May	Final coordination meeting
2001	July	October	Holding of the international conference

Venue

Because of the comprehensive nature of the issue, Bolivia proposes that the conference be held at United Nations Headquarters.

Preparatory committee for the conference

For the organization of the preparatory committee for the conference, Bolivia proposes the following:

(a) The committee should include representatives of the main arms-producing and arms-exporting countries;

(b) The committee should also include representatives of arms-importing countries that are experiencing internal problems as a result of the illicit trade in and indiscriminate use of small arms;

(c) The committee should be chaired by a representative of the United Nations.

Brazil

[Original: English]
[20 May 1999]

Objective

To reach consensual conclusions that will lead to the control and, at a later stage, the elimination of the illicit trade in arms. A corollary would be to reduce the concentration of small arms and light weapons that are beyond the control of the institutions in charge of the security of States.

Scope

The main goal of the conference would be to consider all national, regional or international measures already taken or under consideration; for example, the Organization of American States Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, and a protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition and other related materials that is being negotiated in the context of a future United Nations convention against transnational organized crime.

Besides the question of illicit trade, the conference could also examine the consequences of this trade. In this case, it could be convenient to suggest measures to reduce and eliminate stocks of small arms and light weapons that are out of the control of State institutions.

In this sense, it is expected that the conference reach a conclusion that will lead to a more concrete, safe and continued implementation of the recommendations of the Panel and the Group of Governmental Experts, as in the respective reports of the Secretary-General (A/52/298 and A/54/258).

Agenda

The first aim should be the adoption of a consensually agreed plan of action. This plan should contain precise measures, set within a time-frame, with indications of technical and financial resources, as well as mechanisms for cooperation and execution. The plan of action could also foresee the negotiation, as appropriate, of legal instruments for specific items such as the harmonization of firearm marking systems.

Dates

Brazil agrees with holding the conference in 2001, on the understanding that a preparatory committee would be established, which should meet at least twice, allowing a reasonable period of time for the preparation of the conference.

Place

Brazil agrees with holding the Conference in Switzerland, as long as it is convened in accordance with the provisions of the Headquarters Agreement in force with the United Nations.

Canada

[Original: English]
[30 April 1999]

Canada believes that the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons (hereinafter referred to as small arms) have now been widely recognized as an important issue affecting international as well as human security, one that demands urgent action. Such action is needed in order to enhance international and regional security; reduce the risk of armed conflict, political violence, terrorism and violent crime; combat and suppress the illicit trafficking in small arms; promote sustainable peace settlements and good governance; and, above all, stop human suffering.

Scope

Canada welcomed the decision of the General Assembly in resolution 53/77 E to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, no later than 2001. In this light, Canada strongly believes that the scope of the conference must be sufficiently broad and comprehensive to ensure that the problem of small arms in all its aspects is confronted. All aspects that directly relate to the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms must be addressed, not merely those aspects that relate to the illicit arms trade, narrowly defined.

Furthermore, Canada considers that the title of the resolution, "Small arms", defines the scope of the conference in terms of weapons covered. In this context, Canada notes that small arms were defined in the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts (A/52/298, annex) as being those weapons not covered by the United Nations Register of Conventional Weapons but those which are manufactured to military specifications for use as lethal instruments of war. Accordingly, it is Canada's view that the conference should focus on small arms that are manufactured to military specifications to perform a military function.

Objective and agenda

Canada believes that the objective of the conference should be to develop an international programme of action that would comprise a range of measures to address the various aspects of the small arms problem, and that the agenda of the conference should be shaped to this end. Such a range of measures could include legally binding instruments to address gaps in the body of international humanitarian law and politically binding codes of conduct or guidelines to control transfers of small arms, as well as other cooperative, capacity-building and transparency arrangements.

Canada notes the many other important conferences are already scheduled to be held during 2000 and believes that the dates of the small arms conference should be set in 2001.

Venue

As to the venue of the conference, Canada expresses its appreciation of the offer made by the Government of Switzerland to hold the conference at Geneva.

Preparatory work

Canada strongly believes that careful and comprehensive work by a preparatory committee is essential to ensure that a successful conference will result. Canada notes the views of other countries that at least two meetings of such a preparatory committee are needed. Canada reiterates its interest in holding one of the meetings of the preparatory committee in Canada at a date to be determined at a subsequent stage.

Canada expresses its appreciation of the work undertaken so far by the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, set up in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 52/38 J and looks forward to its report, in particular its recommendations with respect to the convening of the international conference.

Canada is also encouraged by the progress being made in elaborating a protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition and other related materials that is being negotiated in connection with the proposed United Nations convention against transnational organized crime. Canada expresses the hope that these negotiations will be successful and that a protocol can be concluded before the international conference takes place. Furthermore, Canada would like to ensure that measures developed under the protocol to combat the illicit trafficking in firearms (e.g., mechanisms for the marking of firearms), could be formulated so as to apply broader aspects of the small arms issue as well.

China

[Original: Chinese]
[21 May 1999]

China supports the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects by 2001.

China considers that, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the main goals of the conference should be ending illegal transfers of weapons and promoting a solution to the problem of small arms. Concrete measures might include: (a) combating the illegal manufacture and transfer of small arms; (b) strengthening internal control over legal transfers; and (c) the collection and destruction of surplus small arms in post-conflict situations. The specific content of such measures could be left until the next session of the General Assembly, when they could be discussed in depth in the context of the preparatory work for the conference.

China considers that the scope of the conference should be illegal transfers and closely related questions, including measures to increase domestic control over legal transfers, such as the strengthening of relevant legislation and controls to prevent legally transferred small arms from falling into illegal channels. Legal transfers however, should not be a matter for consideration at the conference. Practical disarmament measures, such as the collection and destruction of surplus small arms, should be limited to post-conflict areas in which such weapons exist in unchecked quantities.

China proposes that consideration of the agenda of the conference should be left to the preparatory committee.

With regard to the dates of the conference, China agrees that the conference should be convened in 2001.

With regard to the venue of the conference, China notes the desire of the country concerned to host the conference and will give full consideration to the choice of venue according to practical circumstances.

China proposes that two or three sessions of the preparatory committee be convened so that an in-depth, detailed discussion of matters related to the conference can be held to ensure the success of the conference.

With regard to the qualifications of conference participants, China considers that participants in the 2001 international conference and its preparatory committee

should in principle be States Members of the United Nations or other sovereign States; nevertheless, it may be appropriate to consider inviting relevant intergovernmental organizations such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the International Customs Organization to the conference as observers.

Colombia

[Original: Spanish]
[22 March 1999]

The Government of Colombia is of the view that the recommendations which have been made to combat the circulation and illicit trade in small arms should be studied by the international community as a whole and considered as the starting point for negotiations on a binding convention of universal scope in this field.

A binding convention to combat the illicit arms trade in all its aspects must commit States to adopt or strengthen legislative measures for the domestic control of small arms, as an indispensable requirement for preventing the criminal use of these arms and their diversion through illicit channels. The convention must also establish mechanisms for ensuring compliance with its provisions, such as those necessary for oversight and control of all links in the chain of the trade in such arms, from production to the distribution and marketing stages.

Since much of the illicit arms trade is carried out in an underground economy consisting of a chain of international black markets supported by their own supply sources, information and communications systems and distribution and financing networks, it is easy to conclude that the fight against this scourge requires the conclusion of international agreements on various aspects of the problem, such as:

(a) Institutional and legal changes;

(b) Judicial cooperation;

(c) Cooperation among relevant authorities and exchange of experience, information and legal evidence;

(d) Legal action against money-laundering;

(e) Control and monitoring of borders by air, sea and land;

(f) Coordination of intelligence for the detection and interdiction of illicit trafficking;

(g) Establishment of international systems for controlling the legal trade in these arms (such as markings on arms and ammunition) and controlling the parts for their assembly and certain types of military equipment (such as night-vision equipment);

(h) Advisory services and training of personnel;

(i) Provision of equipment and technology for detecting and tracing the illicit arms trade.

Again within a legal framework, bilateral cooperation agreements on specific strategies for preventing and combating this scourge must be concluded between the countries affected by the circulation and illicit trade in small arms and the countries from which such arms originate.

Scope of the conference

General Assembly resolution 53/77 E provides that the conference in question should be devoted to the theme of the illicit arms trade in all its aspects. The aspects that the conference should address include, *inter alia*:

(a) Ease of access to arms which are distributed and sold without adequate regulation or restriction;

(b) Widespread availability of arms which circulate freely in various countries and regions;

(c) Inadequacy of regulations on carrying and owning weapons;

(d) Weakness of the mechanisms for the enforcement of arms control regulations;

(e) Lack of control over the production, distribution and sale of arms and military equipment;

(f) Excessive production of small arms, which leads to their accumulation and proliferation and to illicit trafficking in them;

(g) Storage in unsafe and congested facilities;

(h) Corruption at various levels;

(i) Distribution of the domestic production of small arms;

(j) Inadequate disposal of arms in post-conflict situations;

(k) Ineffective border controls;

(l) Weakness of import and export control mechanisms;

(m) Proliferation of arms as a result of exclusively commercial and/or political considerations.

Since the problem of the illicit arms trade is due largely to the easy access to arms which are distributed and sold without serious restrictions and to the availability of arms which circulate freely in various countries and regions,

the implementation of measures to ensure greater transparency, oversight and control of the legal arms trade, programmes for the collection and destruction of arms that are not necessary for legitimate defence, and other measures to reduce and prevent the proliferation and excessive accumulation of arms would also help to prevent the unregulated circulation of these arms, reduce their availability and thus prevent illicit trafficking in them.

Agenda, dates and venue of the conference

The procedural part of the agenda of the conference could follow the models of previous conferences. Nevertheless, in order to determine which items should be included in the substantive part, it will be necessary to first agree on the objectives and scope of the conference, which is the responsibility of the preparatory committee.

With regard to the dates for the holding of the conference and of the meetings of its preparatory committee, these will have to be determined in accordance with the calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2000 and 2001 and in coordination with the host State.

With regard to the possible venue of the conference, the Government of Colombia welcomes and appreciates the generous offer of the Government of Switzerland to host the conference and the offer of the Government of Canada to host a meeting of the preparatory committee.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[9 June 1999]

Cuba has followed with interest the treatment of the topic of small arms in the United Nations, especially the discussions that have been prompted by the consideration in recent years of resolutions on the subject by the General Assembly.

In this connection, we reiterate the views transmitted by the Government of Cuba under General Assembly resolution 52/38 J, entitled "Small arms", and contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/169/Add.4), in which we express, *inter alia*, our willingness to participate actively in an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, should there be an international agreement to convene it.

An international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects should be an adequate framework for joint efforts by the States concerned in the search for means and ways of confronting this undesirable phenomenon.

For this reason, all the conditions should be provided so as to ensure that, both in the preparatory process and in the conference itself, the States concerned can participate actively and carry out their work on a broadly transparent basis.

The conference would be the appropriate forum for States to describe their experiences in the internal control of the arms that they possess, for example, any legal and/or administrative measures that they may have promulgated, on the basis of their constitutional norms, to regulate the use of arms in their respective territories.

In order to provide the conditions to which we referred in the preceding paragraphs, the objectives, scope and agenda of the international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, as well as the related preparatory work, must be defined clearly. The dates and venue are also important.

Mindful of this responsibility, the Government of the Republic of Cuba submits below its observations on the elements referred to in the preceding paragraph.

Objective

The objective of the conference should be to draft a political declaration reflecting the elements of a consensus which exist or which might be achieved with respect to the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, and also to agree on a common programme of action that can make it possible to combat this type of arms trade.

Scope

Cuba considers that the conference debates should be limited to the illicit arms trade.

The exceptional opportunity which the conference should provide to discuss the issues relating to the illicit trade in all types of arms, not only conventional arms (including sophisticated conventional arms), but also weapons of mass annihilation, munitions and explosives, should be utilized.

Agenda

The conference agenda should contain, *inter alia*, items relating to those issues which arise as part of the illicit arms trade proper, as well as to the causes of this type of trade, measures to strengthen State control over the manufacturing, storage and supply of arms, and the development of international cooperation in combating the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, including cooperation among police, customs and frontier agencies.

Dates and venue

We will be flexible in considering any proposal on the subject of dates. Nevertheless, as much lead time as possible should be provided in order to ensure an adequate preparatory process for the conference. Accordingly, 2001 seems to us to be the most appropriate time for the convening of the conference.

With regard to the venue, it is important to ensure the attendance of all States concerned. For that reason, those cities which have the largest possible number of accredited diplomatic representatives of other States in their territory could perhaps be considered in order to ensure broad participation in the event.

Related preparatory work

In its 53 years of existence, the United Nations has acquired vast experience in preparing various international forums on different topics of interest to the international community. This experience should be taken into account in the preparatory phase of the event.

The establishment of an open-ended preparatory committee to ensure the participation of all States concerned is the most appropriate mechanism for undertaking the preparatory work related to the conference.

All of the above-mentioned elements — the objective, scope, agenda, dates and venue of the international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects and the related preparatory work — are closely linked, and success in defining one will have an impact on the definition of others.

The Government of the Republic of Cuba reaffirms its willingness to participate actively in the preparatory process for the conference and in the conference itself, once the international community takes a decision in the matter.

Germany

[Original: English]
[27 April 1999]

The excessive and uncontrolled accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons (hereinafter referred to as small arms) poses a threat to peace and security and reduces the prospects for sustainable development in many regions of the world. The international community has recognized the scale of this problem, the solution of which requires a concerted approach to the task of both drastically reducing the huge stocks of uncontrolled small arms in crisis areas and of effectively preventing the continued influx of such weapons. The problems associated with small arms have many root causes which call for effective action. A differentiated approach which includes preventive as well as reactive measures and which takes account of the complexity of the problem is therefore called for.

In its resolution 53/77 E, the General Assembly decided to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001. The context of this resolution suggests that the conference should focus on small arms manufactured to military specifications. Furthermore, it requires that all aspects of the illicit circulation of those weapons be tackled. These aspects were dealt with comprehensively in the 1997 report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons, which was prepared with the assistance of a Panel of Governmental Experts (A/52/298). The two sets of reduction and prevention measures contained therein were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/38 J and are fully supported by the European Union.

In the 1997 report, while stating that accumulations of small arms and light weapons become excessive and destabilizing when a State, whether supplier or recipient, does not exercise restraint in the production, transfer, acquisition and holding of such weapons beyond those needed for legitimate national or collective defence and internal security, notes that there is no single cause for the accumulation of small arms and their subsequent transformation into instability and conflict. The report observes that the variety of different causes is usefully categorized by demand and supply factors, although the distinction between both factors is not always clear-cut, and that the predominance of demand or supply factors varies by subregion and State, as well as by period of time. The European Union notes that weapons which have originally been legally transferred, in many cases through subsequent illegal transactions, form the stockpiles from which the illicit flows of weapons are supplied. The European Union looks forward to the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and to the views of the Group on the scope and objectives of the international conference.

The European Union is strongly in favour of a wide and comprehensive scope for the international conference, to be convened in accordance with General Assembly resolution 53/77 E. The conference should deal with both the preventive and reactive aspects of the small arms problem and envisage effective ways and means to combat and contribute to ending the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms; to contribute to the reduction of existing accumulations of these weapons to levels consistent

with the legitimate security needs of countries; and to help solve the problems caused by such accumulations.

Therefore, a conference dealing with all aspects of the illicit trade in small arms should consider all important factors leading to their excessive and uncontrolled accumulation, including those referred to in the 1997 report of the Secretary-General, that is, *inter alia*:

(a) Covert supply by Governments to non-State entities;

(b) Export of weapons surplus for purely commercial purposes;

(c) Large-scale granting of arms licences to civilians or the deliberate distribution of weapons by Governments or opposition forces to the population in times of crisis or internal conflict;

(d) Lack of State control over State or private arms holdings, including losses by security forces owing to theft, corruption or ethnic and political affinities;

(e) Collapse of governmental control, the fragmentation of State holdings which are inherited by competing factions and armed parts of the population;

(f) Inability or lack of will of States to ensure the security and rights of their population and the subsequent demand for self-protection etc.

The conference should equally consider a wide range of measures to be taken to tackle the problem of small arms. These measures could embrace, *inter alia*:

(a) Adequate regulation of production (including marking), transfer and holding of small arms, as well as measures of transparency and confidence-building;

(b) Collection and destruction of all weapons which are not under legal possession or are not required for the purposes of national or collective defence and internal security;

(c) Strengthening international cooperation among police, intelligence, customs and border control services;

(d) Provision of assistance for measures at the national level to strengthen the control of Governments of holdings, internal trade and international transfers through improved legal and administrative procedures, including training of police, customs and border control officials;

(e) A comprehensive and integrated approach to security and development;

(f) Regional or subregional initiatives on small arms;

(g) International or regional cooperation to support measures for the collection and destruction of small arms and light weapons in the context of post-conflict demobilization;

(h) Approaches to and incentives for the collection of small arms in uncontrolled circulation or unregulated possession.

The European Union is encouraged by the negotiations under way in Vienna on a draft protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition and other related materials, which is taking place in the context of the negotiations on the draft United Nations convention against transnational organized crime. The European Union expresses the hope that the negotiations on the draft protocol, which cover one aspect of the small arms problem, will be concluded before the international conference takes place.

The objective of the conference, in the view of the European Union, could be politically binding guidelines or a legally binding instrument. The conference should equally adopt a programme of action encompassing all areas of possible international cooperation in small arms. The agenda of the conference should be formulated accordingly.

As to the preparation of the conference, it seems necessary to hold at least two meetings of the preparatory committee which the European Union would prefer to be open-ended.

In the view of the European Union, the conference should be held in 2001, keeping in mind the dense disarmament calendar in 2000 and the necessary convening of one or more sessions of the preparatory committee to ensure careful preparation of the conference.

With respect to the venue of the conference, the European Union expresses its appreciation of the offer by the Government of Switzerland to host the conference at Geneva.

The associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic , Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the associated country of Cyprus, as well as countries members of the European Free Trade Association that are members of the European Economic Area (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), have declared their alignment with this common response to General Assembly resolution 53/77 E.

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

[Original: English]
[29 July 1999]

Small arms today are the main cause of the death and injury of thousands of innocent people, including women and children, in regional armed conflicts throughout the world. It is, therefore, high time for the international community and in particular the United Nations to mobilize their efforts to stop this carnage. They should continue their efforts with a view to adopting appropriate measures to reduce and prevent the excessive accumulation of small arms in regions of conflict, especially through reinforcing legal restraints on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the decision of the General Assembly to convene an international conference on illicit arms trade in all its aspects, not later than 2001. This conference will certainly increase public awareness with regard to the problem of excessive accumulation of small arms and it provides a unique opportunity for States and civil society to address multifaceted aspects of the question.

It is also imperative for regional centres and organizations to be activated to address this problem in a regional context. Regional solutions, which take into account the specific characteristics of each region and develop an indigenous approach in this regard, can best deal with the problem of illicit trade in small arms.

We should endeavour to have a successful conference in 2001 and, to this end, it is imperative that its objectives, scope and agenda are clearly worked out and defined.

Objective

The main objective of the Conference should be combating the excessive accumulation of small arms globally and in particular in the regions of armed conflicts through the adoption of measures to reduce and prevent the illicit arms trade in small arms and light weapons. The conference, for this purpose, should consider the main factors leading and contributing to the excessive accumulation of small arms and may adopt a plan of action consisting of specific coordinated efforts by the international community to reduce and prevent illicit trafficking as well as to face and resolve the problems associated with the excessive accumulation of small arms.

Scope

As the name of the conference indicates, the scope of the international conference will be the illicit trade in all its aspects. This would require the conference to address overall and different aspects of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The conference may also touch upon aspects of the legal trade or manufacture as they are related to the illicit trade, as well as the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms.

The conference should avoid duplicating the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, established by the Economic and Social Council, on the elaboration of a convention against transnational organized crime, which is concentrating on the prevention of illicit manufacturing and trafficking in firearms.

Agenda

The agenda of the conference should be broad enough to cover all relevant issues for consideration. It should also include the adoption of the final document or plan of action of the conference. The preparatory committee of the conference shall take into account the responses of Member States to the note verbale of the Secretary-General as well as the 1997 report of the Secretary-General on small arms and his upcoming report in 1999 as useful sources for formulating a comprehensive and well-balanced agenda for the Conference.

Venue

The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the offer by the Government of Switzerland to host the international conference at Geneva in 2001.

Preparatory Committee

For the purpose of adequate preparation for the conference, a preparatory committee should be established. The Preparatory Committee would require at least two sessions and should be open-ended.

Jamaica

[Original: English]
[4 August 1999]

The Government of Jamaica is of the view that the scope of the proposed international conference should be broad enough to consider all aspects of the illicit trade in arms in the context of a comprehensive and coordinated action programme to reduce and prevent the excessive and

destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons.

The illicit arms trade has, within recent years, assumed alarming proportions. One of its most troubling manifestations has been a linkage with the narcotics trade and with terrorism, thus contributing to an entrenchment of the drug trade and a frightening escalation of violence and violent crimes. This has seriously undermined the peace and security of many countries and will increasingly threaten not only their stability but that of international peace and security.

The Government of Jamaica wishes to draw attention to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, adopted on 13 November 1997, a concrete example of action taken at the regional level to combat this menace, and proposes that it be considered as one of the main documents for the conference.

It is understood that the Government of Switzerland has offered to host the conference. In considering the dates for the conference, consideration should be given to allowing sufficient time for the necessary preparatory work to be undertaken.

Japan

[Original: English]
[29 April 1999]

1. Objective

"Norm setting" and "Action plan" can be two main objectives of the international conference.

(a) Norm setting

In 1995, the Secretary-General urged the international community to seriously address the problems of small arms and light weapons in his report entitled "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace" (A/50/60–S/1995/1). Then, in his 1997 report on small arms (A/52/298), prepared with the assistance of the Panel of Governmental Experts, it is stated that

> "... while there are some agreed global norms and standards against weapons of mass destruction, there are no such norms or standards that can be used in reducing the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons. These are the weapons increasingly used as primary instruments of violence in the internal conflicts dealt with by the United Nations."

Efforts will have to be made to work out a document or documents (legally binding, if possible) embodying some basic norms and standards in this regard. The joint action on small arms that the European Union adopted as a legally binding instrument on 17 December 1998 might serve as a useful guide in such efforts. The international conference should aim to mobilize the commitment of all participating States to such a document or to documents to be agreed upon.

(b) Action plan

With respect to some regions, such as Africa, where excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons have already taken place, numerous efforts such as workshops, training of human resources, weapons collection projects etc. have been initiated in recent years. However, these efforts are still relatively modest in scale and are often conducted under various independent initiatives. For the early solution of the problems, a more coordinated and comprehensive action-oriented approach would be required. The international conference should serve as an occasion to adopt an international action plan for this purpose.

2. Scope

Weapons to be considered at the international conference should be limited to small arms and light weapons, except for anti-personnel landmines. However, in dealing with the problems related to regions such as Africa where the reduction of such weapons has to be carried out, all types of small arms, including civilian firearms, will have to be considered.

As to the meaning of the term "in all its aspects", the scope of the issues to be taken up at the international conference should be kept as broad as possible. Even the legal aspect of the arms trade will have to be considered as long as this is relevant in combating the illicit arms trade. Social, economic, development assistance, law-enforcement aspects, for example, cannot be excluded from the outset. Naturally, due attention will have to be paid to the progress made in relation to the draft protocol on firearms by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

3. Agenda

Since it is essential to have the cooperation of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in

combating the problems of small arms and light weapons, it is desirable to set aside some time to allow their representatives to make presentations at the international conference.

4. Dates

In view of the need for sufficient time for preparation, as well as the crowded schedule of other major international conferences in 2000, such as the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the middle of 2001 should be good timing for the convening of this international conference.

5. Venue

Japan supports the offer by the Government of Switzerland to host the international conference at Geneva, the only announced candidate at present. In addition to the geographical advantage of easy access from most places, the availability of the United Nations conference facilities at Geneva is a favourable factor.

6. Preparatory Committee

It should be desirable to hold at least two meetings of the preparatory committee, perhaps once in the first half of 2000 and another in early 2001.

7. Other

Japan considers that the level of the heads of delegations of participating States at the international conference should be at the level of Cabinet Minister.

Jordan

[Original: Arabic]
[26 May 1999]

Introduction

Considering the growing problems associated with the increasing incidence of trafficking in and the accumulation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons in various parts of the world, together with the threat that such phenomena pose to national and regional security and stability, Jordan hereby confirms its support for the proposed holding of a conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects.

Objective

We propose that the conference should aim to achieve the following objectives:

(a) To curb the proliferation and accumulation of small arms and light weapons and to bring to a halt the illicit trade therein;

(b) To reduce present stockpiles to levels consistent with the internal security and national defence requirements of States;

(c) To find solutions to problems caused by the proliferation and accumulation of small arms and light weapons in a number of countries and regions;

(d) To provide the necessary technical and financial assistance to support measures aimed at combating illicit trafficking in and the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons.

Scope

To define the magnitude and scope of the problem with regard to the manufacture and accumulation of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and to analyse and find appropriate solutions to the political, economic and social problems arising therefrom.

Agenda

We would welcome the inclusion of the following items in the conference agenda:

(a) The growing threat posed to civil society by the accumulation of small arms and light weapons, and the role played by such weapons in fuelling the violence that afflicts civil society;

(b) The political, economic and social consequences of the accumulation of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons; the role played by small arms and light weapons in fuelling civil war, impeding development, pushing up crime rates, reducing school enrolment rates and exposing women and children to violence;

(c) Confidence-building measures, including transparency of military budgets and information-sharing about small arms and light weapons;

(d) The establishment of international regulations to control the trade in small arms, including manufacturing restrictions such as the marking of weapons to facilitate tracking; restriction of small arms manufacturing and trading to authorized manufacturers and dealers in order to help curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and to

prevent illicit trafficking in and the illicit circulation of such weapons;

(e) Bilateral and regional cooperation and assistance to support measures aimed at combating illicit trafficking in and the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons, including rural development and the provision of assistance to small communities.

Date

We propose that the conference should be held during 2001 so that the coming century will mark the beginning of an earnest and sincere concerted effort to eliminate this problem. This will also leave enough time for the consultations and preparations needed to guarantee the success of the conference.

Venue

We propose that the conference should be held under the auspices of the General Assembly.

Malta

[Original: English]
[5 May 1999]

The Government of Malta is of the view that the objective and scope of the proposed international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects should be a convention or similar agreement on the illicit arms trade. The Government of Malta suggests that the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances could possibly be used as a guide in this case. Such a convention on the illicit arms trade should include the following issues:

(a) Provisions to declare that the illicit arms trade is a recognized international crime, similar to the recognition given to piracy and slavery. This would be particularly relevant in the sphere of international maritime law;

(b) Practical measures to ensure feasibility of enforcement by States parties.

Malta's keen interest in the introduction of a United Nations convention on the illicit arms trade is particularly related to its concerns in the area of trans-shipment activities. In this context, it is suggested that an important area to be covered by such a convention would be the exchange of timely information among States.

Monaco

[Original: French]
[8 March 1999]

The Princely Government can only endorse the principles that led the General Assembly to decide, in its resolution 53/77 E, entitled "Small arms", to hold an international conference on the illicit arms trade, which ought to result in the adoption of effective measures to regulate and monitor the arms trade.

Russian Federation

[Original: Russian]
[19 April 1999]

The Russian Federation has already expressed support for the holding of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects (see A/53/169). In doing so, our position is that the discussion at this international forum will focus on the problem of combating the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. We are not opposed to discussing at the conference questions relating to the legal arms trade, but only in those cases where it has become a source of illicit circulation. In addition, we do not agree with the idea of including in the agenda the questions of limiting and regulating conventional deliveries of weapons and combat equipment, which are unrelated to the conference's mandate.

We believe that an important place in the conference's work could be given to a discussion of the basic areas for cooperation by States in combating the illicit circulation of weapons and of measures that are being undertaken at the national and international levels in order to put an end to this phenomenon.

For us, it is a matter of fundamental importance that the conference should yield concrete and meaningful results. For example, it should prepare or propose for further elaboration a series of measures and principles for limiting illegal arms deliveries. In view of the continuing differences on the part of the States Members of the United Nations in their approach to this problem, decisions taken at the conference must be based on the broadest possible spectrum of the views of both the suppliers as well as the receivers of arms.

In connection with the above, we believe that the conference being planned ought not to pursue overly ambitious objectives — that would surely doom it to failure. We also consider it unacceptable for documents and

proposals submitted by any regional organizations as reflecting universal principles to be used as the basis of the conference's programme of work. (During the session of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms held at Geneva in February 1999, attempts were already being made to use the European Union's action plan to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons as the basis for future discussions.)

As regards organizational aspects, we support the idea of convening such a conference in 2001 at Geneva. We also believe that the establishment of a preparatory committee, which would hold no more than two sessions, may be required in order to organize the holding of the conference.

Singapore

[Original: English]
[4 May 1999]

The proposed international conference on illicit arms trade in all its aspects presents an opportunity to develop a coordinated international programme to curb the illicit production of and trafficking in small arms. The objective of such a conference should be to deal with illicit trafficking in small arms, specifically, to identify the root causes of illicit small arms trafficking, and to recommend and endorse measures, both national and international, to curb illicit transfers.

While the small arms problem has many dimensions, the conference should deal in particular with issues related to illicit production of and trafficking in small arms, and ways to combat these illegal activities. To this end, measures and controls to prevent the illicit diversion of legally traded small arms to the black market and to curb the illicit trade can be considered, without affecting the right of States to produce or acquire small arms for legitimate self-defence. These recommendations should take into account the different circumstances and needs of different regions.

The conference could consider adopting the following measures to combat illicit small arms trafficking:

(a) *National legislation and administrative controls*. Measures to minimize illegal losses of small arms from government stockpiles owing to lax national controls should be further considered. These preventive national measures include: adequate national legislation and enforcement measures to monitor and control national arms production and licit small arms transfers as well as to combat illicit ones; detailed and reliable national records on small arms transfers and national holdings; safe and secure storage of national stocks of small arms procured for self-defence and national security purposes; responsible policies on disposal of surplus small arms;

(b) *International cooperation*. At the international level, the conference could consider ways to strengthen cooperation and consultation among States, in particular cooperation among law enforcement agencies, in combating illegal small arms trafficking. Such cooperation could include greater information exchange among law enforcement agencies and the sharing of expertise in developing a robust national legislation on small arms possession and licensing;

(c) *Post-conflict demobilization*. The conference could further explore the possibility of international coordination for the post-conflict collection and destruction of small arms and the demobilization of ex-combatants, to ensure that surplus stocks of small arms are disposed of correctly and responsibly.

South Africa

[Original: English]
[24 June 1999]

South Africa believes that addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons must be viewed from an inclusive perspective of arms control and disarmament, post-conflict peace-building, conflict prevention and socio-economic development. Through the coordination of these approaches, a holistic strategy should be developed that will assess and identify priorities and determine achievable steps to be taken to contain and reduce small arms and light weapons proliferation.

South Africa considers it essential that a regional approach should be formulated to address the problem of the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons that is based on regional concerns and adopts an incremental approach. This will ensure that as each region of the world develops an indigenous approach to address the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons, the building blocks will be put in place to effectively deal with this issue globally.

In its response to the Secretary-General's report on small arms (A/53/169/Add.3), South Africa stated that an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects should be held after 1999 to enable Governments and regional organizations to share their experiences, and facilitate dialogue. The aim of the conference should be to increase cooperation and avoid duplication of initiatives to

ensure that scarce resources are utilized effectively. The conference should formulate an action plan to combat this problem of proliferation, based upon the experiences of indigenous regional approaches in this regard.

Therefore, South Africa welcomed the decision by the General Assembly in resolution 53/77 E to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001.

Scope

South Africa interprets the scope of this conference to be broad enough to include a focus on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects based, among others, on the issues identified in the Secretary-General's report on small arms (A/52/298). For the international conference to effectively deal with the problem of illicit arms trade in all its aspects, South Africa believes that the scope should not focus on the illicit arms trade only but should also focus on the "legal" trade in arms. Only through increased transparency and better control of the legal arms trade would the international community be able to constrain illicit arms trade.

Objective

South Africa believes that the objective of the conference should be to increase cooperation in combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and to avoid duplication of initiatives in order to ensure that scarce resources are utilized effectively. In this regard, the conference should formulate an action plan to combat this problem of proliferation, based upon the experiences of regional approaches.

Agenda

The agenda of the conference should be all-inclusive. To this effect, the agenda should include opportunities to consider all national and regional approaches and measures to address the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The approaches and measures to be considered in the agenda include options for a legally binding instrument on small arms, criteria/guidelines for the transfer of these weapons, destruction of stockpiles of surplus weapons, transparency and information exchange issues.

The conference will provide an ideal opportunity for a cooperative partnership to be established among Governments, international and regional organizations and the non-governmental community to mobilize public and political support to address the problems associated with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Therefore, the role of the non-governmental community in assisting Governments to achieve this support and aiding in the compilation of reliable data regarding the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects should be explored at the conference. In this regard, relevant non-governmental organizations should be able to fully participate in the conference.

Date

Owing to the various disarmament and other conferences taking place during 2000, South Africa supports holding the international conference on small arms in the second half of 2001.

Preparatory committee

This timing of the conference will also provide sufficient time for the work of an open-ended preparatory committee. This committee should give further consideration to exact dates during 2001 to enable the General Assembly to take a decision to this effect at its fifty-fifth session. For the international conference to achieve practical results, preparations at a national, regional and international level would be imperative, taking into account the views of all Member States, regional and subregional organizations, international agencies, and experts in the field. The formal preparatory process for an international conference should, therefore, only commence after a decision has been taken by the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, based on the views of Member States on the objective, scope, agenda, dates and venue, and taking into account the report of the Secretary-General on small arms (A/52/298) as well as the recommendations made by the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to Assembly resolution 52/38 J that are to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. This preparatory committee should hold at least three meetings to ensure adequate preparation for the conference. The venue of these preparatory meetings should be carefully chosen so as to enable the widest possible participation, especially by States affected by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Venue

While welcoming the offer made by the Government of Switzerland to host the conference and that Geneva be the venue of the conference, South Africa does not consider this offer to exclude or prejudge the consideration of any other such offers, in particular from those parts of the world in which the illicit trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons are most prevalent.

Sri Lanka

[Original: English]
[17 March 1999]

The Government of Sri Lanka supports the proposal contained in paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 53/77 E, that the conference on illicit arms trade in all its aspects be convened no later than 2001.

Sri Lanka also notes that the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, in which Sri Lanka is a member, will be making recommendations to the Secretary-General on the objective, scope, agenda, dates, venue of and preparatory committee for the proposed conference.

Turkey

[Original: English]
[26 July 1999]

Turkey, mindful of the serious threat posed to international peace and security by the illicit small arms trade and the destabilizing impact caused by the illegal transfer of such weapons at the regional level, attaches importance to and participates actively in the efforts to control small arms.

In line with this perception, Turkey in 1996 became the first State to introduce the idea of establishing a small arms register within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In the framework of the Forum for the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, Turkey supported the initiative of the United States to form a follow-up list of illegal arms traders and dealers. At the same Forum, Turkey also made contributions to the efforts aimed at formulating common criteria in order to determine any increase in transfer or excessive accumulation of small arms.

Turkey also endorsed the initiatives at the United Nations mainly aimed at controlling small arms, and preventing their illegal trade and the accumulation of these types of weapons, especially in the hands of non-governmental elements. Turkey, furthermore, backed the recommendations of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms contained in the Secretary-General's report on the same subject (A/53/298).

In keeping with the above summarized position, Turkey, during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, voted in favour of all resolutions concerning small arms. As a co-sponsor of General Assembly resolution 53/77 E, entitled "Small arms", Turkey supports the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade as had been previously envisaged in General Assembly resolution 52/38 J. Turkey reiterates that the convening of an international conference will allow an in-depth analysis of all aspects of the illicit arms trade.

Turkey wishes to provide the following reply to paragraph 3 (a) of General Assembly resolution 53/77 E, in which the Secretary-General is requested to seek the views of Member States on the recommendation concerning the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects:

(a) Keeping in mind the dates of other global and regional-level disarmament meetings and conferences, it would be useful to convene a broad-based international conference before 2001 with the participation of not only States, but international organizations, and non-governmental organizations as well;

(b) Turkey, for technical and logistical reasons, may look favourably to the Geneva option as the possible venue of this conference;

(c) In the process of determining the agenda of the conference, the issues raised in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/298) can be taken as a base. However, the agenda can be finalized at a preparatory committee which would be held after the determination of the venue and the date of the conference;

(d) The conference, while taking up all aspects of arms smuggling, should address the issues of establishing a global criterion to reduce the excessive accumulation and destabilizing proliferation of small arms, as well as of initiating an international cooperation and coordination mechanism in this respect;

(e) While the conference will be looking into the illegal transfer of small arms, it would also be useful to adopt a more comprehensive approach and review the international and regional initiatives to strengthen national control mechanisms along with establishing transparency in legal transfers of small arms;

(f) At the conference, it would be most timely to discuss the close relationship between the illegal transfer of small arms and transnational organized crime, terrorism and drug trafficking;

(g) The issue of how to fight against the destabilizing proliferation of small arms is being debated by various international organizations and at seminars convened for this purpose. During the conference it would be useful to review these efforts under an agenda item entitled

"Cooperation and coordination with other initiatives in this field".

United Arab Emirates

[Original: English]
[16 March 1999]

The Government of the United Arab Emirates believes that any kind of unlawful arms trade will result in creating a most dangerous environment for all concerned, especially if those arms fall into the hands of terrorists. Therefore, the concerned authorities in the Government of the United Arab Emirates try their utmost to prevent any kind of illicit arms trading, in close cooperation with all the friendly neighbouring countries with a view to preventing this kind of extremely dangerous and unlawful trade.

United States of America

[Original: English]
[25 May 1999]

The United States approach to implementing the 24 recommendations of the 1997 report of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts centres on four clusters of activities: (a) small arms proliferation and excessive accumulations; (b) international criminal activity and illicit trafficking; (c) peacekeeping and post-conflict efforts; and (d) humanitarian and development aspects.

The problems those recommendations address have security, political, humanitarian, cultural, law enforcement, intelligence, development, and arms control dimensions. Therefore, the international response to them must be multidimensional, pursued coherently at all levels, and in all appropriate forums, at the same time avoiding duplication. A single top-down campaign is unlikely to effectively address these problems.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons plays a significant role in exacerbating conflicts and underdevelopment, but it is not the legitimate international trade in arms, or the sale of weapons to law-abiding citizens in stable societies, that contributes most significantly to these problems. The demand for small arms and light weapons is caused primarily by ethnic and religious conflict, economic and social exclusion, poor governance, lack of respect for the rule of law, lack of democratic institutions and lack of respect for human rights.

These root causes promote the unregulated and illegitimate sale of large quantities of weapons to unknown end-users. These sales are usually carried out by profiteers and abetted by the corruption of rogue militias, unscrupulous officials and criminals. In addition to addressing means of supply, the root causes of conflict must also be addressed. The international community must promote democratic institutions as well as continue to curb the spread of small arms and light weapons to conflict-prone areas.

On the development side, the United States subscribes to the 1998 Development Cooperation Guidelines of the Development Assistance Committee which seek to strengthen the capacity of war-torn societies to manage conflict without violence. The United States promotes sustainable development through humanitarian relief, post-crisis assistance and conflict prevention. In the end, however, developing countries are ultimately responsible for their own destiny.

The United States supports post-conflict demobilization and reintegration, monitors human rights problems, and encourages the development of democratic values and institutions in many countries.

To respond to humanitarian and post-conflict crises, the United States has adopted "complex contingency operations" (CCOS). These operations are "quick response" activities, usually composed of political, diplomatic, humanitarian, intelligence, development and security components. United States-led CCOS have been conducted in a number of situations as diverse as Haiti and Somalia. Mindful of the legitimacy of legal arms transfers, the United States, in concert with others, seeks to establish and globalize a set of "best practices" — such as making illegal unauthorized retransfers, or illicit sales by independent brokers who seek havens beyond United States borders. The centrepiece of the United States policy approach is promoting the early completion of the firearms protocol to the transnational organized crime convention and promoting international support for the Model Regulations of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD).

Review of United States implementation of the 1997 recommendations of the United Nations Panel

The United States is currently implementing several initiatives. The United States is: encouraging the international community to commit to full and timely disclosures of all arms shipments being transferred into zones of conflict in Africa; building international support for a voluntary moratorium on arms sales that could fuel interconnected conflicts; meeting with international and non-governmental organizations to exchange information on

regional arms transfers and exploring other steps; encouraging the international community to provide aid for capacity-building in Africa to strengthen sanctions enforcement; encouraging the development of a clearing house for technical information and for rapid exchange of data on possible sanctions violations; encouraging the development of national legislation to criminalize violations of sanctions as the United States has done; negotiating a convention modelled on the Organization of American States Convention against Illicit Trafficking that can be concluded by 2000; and completing negotiations on an agreement to restrict the export of man-portable air-defence systems by 2000.